

by president Alexander Lukashenka after the illegal constitutional referendum which extended his term of office by two years to 2001—set a date for the next presidential elections for May 16 and set up a Central Election Commission to conduct these elections. According to the 1994 constitution, which most of the international community recognizes as legitimate, Lukashenka's term expires in July. Lukashenka has rejected calls for a presidential election and is clearly attempting to neutralize democratic opposition to his authoritarian rule. The most egregious crackdown in recent weeks was the sentencing of CEC chairman Viktor Hanchar, to 10 days "administrative detention". Hanchar suffered some injuries when he was detained and treated roughly by police. He was not given access to his lawyer, Hari Pahanyayla, and his wife was not permitted to see him.

A few days earlier, on February 25, fifteen members of the CEC were arrested by police in a café where they were meeting and discussing reports from local election commissions. Special police did not have a warrant and prevented the videotaping of the arrest by Russian television. Five-day detentions or heavy fines were meted out to several CEC members, including Boris Gyunter, Anatoly Gurinovich, Sergei Obodovsky, Iosif Naumchik, Algimantas Dzygarchus, Alexander Koktysh, Nikolay Pohabov, Valery Sidorenko and Leonid Zakurdayev. Additionally, warnings have been issued to several members of regional opposition elections committees, such as Iosif Naumchik in Vitebsk and Sergei Abadowski in Mogilev. According to Radio Liberty, in Zhodzina, Miensk region, local authorities have begun intimidating people who joined or elected opposition regional election commissions. In Gomel, several opposition activists have been summoned and questioned about their role in the organization of the May presidential elections scheduled by the opposition. Police had seized leaflets about these elections at the office of the Gomel branch of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee.

The repression of the opposition's elections committees is part of a longstanding pattern of Lukashenka's assault on democratic institutions and his campaign to stifle dissent in Belarus. On February 14, 20 students were arrested by police in Miensk for violating street demonstration laws. Among them, Yevgeny Skochko was sentenced to 10 days in jail, Victor Antonov to 5 days in jail, and Kazimir Kuchun and Ilya Banel were fined. Other opposition activists in Gomel and Borisov have been tried for unsanctioned demonstrations over the last few months. Two young workers in Gomel, for instance, were sentenced to 3 days administrative detention for holding an unsanctioned march. According to Reuters, the men were returning from a disco late in the evening and waving banners, which they were bringing home to wash.

Earlier in the month, on February 5, members of the human rights movement Charter '97 were attacked and beaten in Miensk by members of the fascist Russian National Unity party. Andrei Sannikov, the Charter's international coordinator and former deputy foreign minister of Belarus was beaten unconscious. According to the International League for Human Rights a few days later, President Lukashenka trivialized the incident on Belarusian television, saying: "They say that

some fascists have appeared in Miensk and have beaten somebody up. Do you know who they have beaten? Other fascists." On February 27, several thousand marchers participated in a peaceful anti-fascist demonstration in Miensk. Organizers of the demonstration, Ales Bilyatsky who was sentenced to 10 days administrative detention and Oleg Volchek who was given a stiff fine, were cited for committing administrative offenses.

In late January, Lukashenka signed a decree ordering political parties, public organizations and trade unions to re-register during the period February 1 and July 1. The re-registration process includes a variety of onerous stipulations which would have the effect of weakening the NGOs and political parties. On February 17, the Lukashenka-controlled State Press Committee threatened six independent newspapers with closure if they continued to publish information about the opposition's presidential election plans in May, charging them with "calling for the seizure of power in Belarus." On March 2, police searched the offices of one of the six independent newspapers, "Pahonya" in Hrodno, confiscating political cartoons and letters from readers.

Clearly, political tensions are increasing in Belarus, and the divide between the authoritarian president and the democratic opposition is widening. Mr. Lukashenka and his minions should cease and desist their campaign to harass journalists, to drain and demoralize individuals and organizations in the opposition through administrative fines and detentions, and to forcefully squelch the right to the freedoms of expression and of assembly. Continued harassment of the opposition will only aggravate the current constitutional crisis in Belarus and most certainly will not serve to promote reconciliation between the government and opposition. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that the international community continue to speak out on behalf of those whose rights are violated, and that we continue to support the restoration of democracy and rule of law in Belarus.

TRIBUTE TO THE CREW OF THE U.S.S. "PHAON"

HON. JAMES M. TALENT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to praise the officer and crew of the U.S.S. *Phaon*, and their sister ships within the Mobile Service Squadrons. Although often overlooked, their contribution to the War in the Pacific was central to U.S. and allied success in that theater.

A close reading of history will show that America's naval strategy in the Pacific theater, which called for the ability to maintain continuous operations at extreme distances from American port facilities, was in a very real sense made possible through the efforts and sacrifice of the Navy's logistics repair squadrons.

Japan's wartime plans envisioned an active defense across the periphery of its sphere of control, thus denying the United States the bases from which to launch and support offensive operations. Their leadership never prepared for the likelihood that their own forces, operating at extended distances from home

port, would be forced to fight against an American navy that would develop and refine the ability to conduct nearly continuous offensive operations. Under Admirals Halsey and Spruance, the Japanese would commit to battle at one point and then find themselves overextended, or "whipsawed," as American forces struck elsewhere. "Hit 'em where they ain't."

Underpinning this effort, and indeed making much of America's success in the Pacific possible, were the essential contributions made by the Navy's mobile Service Squadrons, which provided at-sea battle damage repair in order to return vessels to combat duty as quickly as possible. The *Phaon*, a battle damage repair ship within Mobile Service Squadron Ten, and her sister ships, materially contributed to fleet support at Tawara, Kwayalein, Eniwetok, Saipan and Tinian. In the words of historian Eric Larrabee, "[t]he fleet had become truly free of its landbound bases."

While much glory is rightly given to the front-line combatants, it is important that we should also recognize the contributions and the sacrifice of our combat support personnel who made ultimate victory possible.

HONORING THE LATE ALEX A. HAUGHT, FEBRUARY 17, 1964–MARCH 3, 1999—REMEMBERING HIS LIFE, SERVICE, AND FRIENDSHIP

HON. BOB CLEMENT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, we are here today to remember our friend, Alex Haught, for there is so much to remember.

I remember when I hired Alex. I already knew a lot about him, his reputation preceded him: law degree, fund-raiser, a great people person, he knew the issues, he was vastly experienced with an excellent political network. And, based on the things I knew about Alex, I hired him.

But those are not the things I remember the most.

I remember how likable he was. He was a great listener. He possessed a gentle sweetness in his character. He genuinely cared about people and had friends in every walk of life. I remember that Alex loved to hunt and fish. When I took him fishing, he caught the biggest fish. He loved his dogs, Truman and Scout, he loved his old Bronco, and the outdoors. I remember Alex as a country boy working in big cities.

I remember his infectious laugh, his loyalty, his compassionate and easygoing manner and his patience. Alex was very unselfish. He was funny. He was tough. He was sensitive.

His tastes were simple. Alex loved music and sports. Most of all, Alex loved his family and his friends.

I trusted, respected and counted on Alex Haught. I loved Alex. As did people in the White House. So did people in White House, Tennessee.

I remember my great faith in Alex Haught—such faith that I placed a large responsibility for my own political future directly on his shoulders, because you could place that kind of faith in Alex. He accomplished more in a